

What can
Tall Tales, Superstitions,
TRADITIONS, &
URBAN LEGENDS

teach us about World History?



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Fountain of Youth

The legendary spring of everlasting life



A Fun Fact

There is a "Fountain of Youth National Archeological Park" located in St. Augustine, Florida, on the site where Ponce de Leon is believed to have originally landed in his search for the legendary spring.

Rumors of the Unknown...

Talk about wishful thinking. Forget about putting cucumbers over your eyes to prevent wrinkles. If there really was a Fountain of Youth, then it would be the hottest thing on the market. Here would be the sample price sheet at your local spa:

Massage	\$60.00
Facial	\$50.00
Manicure	\$30.00
One sip from the Fountain of Youth	\$1,000,000.00

But alas, there is no Fountain of Youth. The people of Europe were pretty optimistic about it in the early 1500s, just a couple of decades after Columbus discovered the New World.

Everyone figured that, if there was a Fountain of Youth, then the New World was the place to find it.

Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon, who actually accompanied Columbus on one of his later voyages to America, is the one who gets most of the credit for trying to locate the Fountain of Youth. He combed over what is now Florida, specifically the city of St. Augustine. He never did go into the spa business, though, so he must not have come up empty handed.

What it tells us about World History...

There are a few misconceptions about the Fountain of Youth. The first is the role that Ponce de Leon played in the search for this powerful spring.

Contrary to popular belief, he wasn't an obsessed maniac who invented this Fountain of Youth and then spent the rest of his life chasing windmills (*or, in this case, fountains*). Actually, it wasn't until after he died that people started putting "Ponce de Leon" and "Fountain of Youth" in the same sentence.

That's not to say that Ponce de Leon hadn't heard about the Fountain of Youth, or that he wasn't interested. All of the Spanish conquistadors were. When they came to the Americas in the early 16th century, the native people told them all kinds of legends.

One of these was about "Bimini," an island full of wealth and prosperity that had a spring of water capable of restoring youth. Naturally, this got everyone's attention. At the time, the Europeans had no way of knowing what was true or not true — it was, after all, the *New World*.

The location of Bimini wasn't exactly known at the time. Explorers guessed that the natives were referring to somewhere near the Bahamas, or Cuba. Of course, Ponce de Leon landed in Florida in 1513.

While the Fountain of Youth was never discovered, these places were pretty good starting points. To this day, people travel to these areas to feel young in the mild weather and crisp air.

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